

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 12, 18, and 20-25 are currently pending in the application. Claims 2, 5, 8-10, 13-17 and 19 have previously been cancelled. Claims 1, 4, 6, 11, 12 and 18 have been amended. New claims 20-25 have been added.

Preliminarily, Applicant notes that the specification has been amended to correct two obvious typographical errors in the reference of figure numbers in the specification.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 3, 4 and 11 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Japan 07-278754.

Applicant notes that JP 07-278754 (application number 07-043667) is a priority document to US 5783143 (Handa et al), and these are corresponding applications in their respective jurisdictions. Their disclosures are substantially identical.

Independent claims 1 and 4 have been amended to recite in part at least one component made from stainless steel contains up to 0.03wt% carbon (emphasis added).

These claims explicitly require that the at least one component is made from stainless steel containing greater than 0.10 wt % amount of nitrogen (a high nitrogen content) distributed substantially uniformly throughout its microstructure as an austenite stabiliser, and up to 0.03wt% carbon (a low carbon content).

By contrast, Handa describes the use of steel having a high carbon content in the range of 0.10-0.17 wt %. Further, Handa teaches that a carbon content of at least 0.10 wt % is considered necessary to ensure adequate strength of the alloy (see column 2, lines 36 to 40 of US 5,783,143).

As such, not only does Handa fails to teach or suggest the steel composition as now recited in claims 1 and 4, but Handa actually teaches away from a hot dip coating apparatus as now claimed.

It has been discovered that steels with a low carbon content of less than 0.03 wt % avoids the growth of a-phase precipitates which is considered to contribute to the improved performance of the steel. The claims have been amended in accordance with the disclosure of the restriction of growth of a-phase precipitates being assisted by the

low carbon content and high nitrogen content of at least 0.10 wt %, as described at page 9, lines 8 to 23 of the PCT application.

None of the art of record, alone or in combination, shows or suggests a hot dip coating apparatus as presently claimed in claims 1 and 4. The Applicant believes that claims 1 and 4 are in condition for allowance for the reasons stated above.

Dependant claims 3 depends from amended independent claim 1 and claim 11 depends from amended independent claim 4, and respectively contain all of the limitations recited therein, and are therefore allowable for the reasons stated above.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 6-7 and 12 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Japan 07-278754.

Dependant claims 6, 7 and 12 ultimately depend on independent claim 4, and contain all of the limitations recited therein, and therefore allowable for the reasons stated above.

Additionally, dependent claim 6 has been amended to recite in pertinent part that the stainless steel layer contains nitrogen and carbon (emphasis added).

None of the art of record, alone or in combination, shows or suggests a hot dip coating apparatus as presently claimed in claim 6. The Applicant believes that claim 6 is in condition for allowance for the reasons stated above.

Dependant claim 7 directly depends from dependant claim 6, and contains all of the limitations recited therein, and is therefore allowable for the reasons stated above.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 3, 4 and 11 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Handa et al 5,783,143 and claims 6-7 and 12 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Handa et al 5,783,143.

As noted above JP 07-278754 (application number 07-043667) is a priority document to US 5783143 (Handa et al), and these are corresponding applications in their respective jurisdictions. Their disclosures are substantially identical. As such, these claims are therefore believed to be allowable for the reasons stated above.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claim 18 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ookouchi et al 5,571,327 in view of Japan 07-278754.

Independent claim 18 has been amended to recite in part at least one component made from stainless steel contains up to 0.03wt% carbon (emphasis added), and is believed to be allowable for the reasons stated above for claims 1 and 4.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claim 18 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ookouchi et al 5,571,327 in view of Handa et al 5,783,143..

Again, as noted above JP 07-278754 (application number 07-043667) is a priority document to US 5783143 (Handa et al), and these are corresponding applications in their respective jurisdictions. Their disclosures are substantially identical. As such, this claim is therefore believed to be allowable for the reasons stated above.

New Claims 20 and 21, 22 and 23, and 24 and 25 depend from claims 1, 4, and 18 respectively and are believed to be allowable for the reasons stated above.

Additionally, Claims 20, 22 and 24 recite in pertinent part that the stainless steel is 304LN stainless steel, and Claims 21, 23, and 25 recite in pertinent part that the stainless steel is 316LN stainless steel. Handa teaches the use of a high chromium content of 20-35 wt %. This is substantially higher than the chromium content of 316LN, and higher than 304LN as claimed in these dependent claims, which are also believed to be allowable for this reason.

Applicant respectfully submits that claims 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 12, 18 and 20-25 are in condition for allowance and respectfully requests a notice thereof. Applicant encourages the Examiner to call its counsel, Arland T. Stein, at 614-233-5104 to resolve any additional questions that the Examiner may have to place the claims in condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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